

REMARKS

With the foregoing amendment claims 1-10 and 12-27 are pending, with claims 1, 8, 15, 22 and 24 being in independent form. Claims 1, 8, and 12-14 have been amended, claims 21-27 are added, and claim 11 has been canceled. No new matter has been added by these amendments. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 6, 7, 11-14, and 17-20 would be allowable if re-written in independent form to include all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claim.

Claim 8 has been amended to include all of the features of claim 11. Accordingly, claims 8-10 and 12-14 are in condition for allowance.

Additionally, independent claim 22 corresponds to claim 6 re-written in independent form and independent claim 24 corresponds to claim 17 re-written in independent form. Accordingly claims 22-27 are in condition for allowance.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-5, 8-10 and 15-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,715,614 issued to Pippin et al. (hereafter "Pippin"). Applicant respectfully traverses.

(a) Claims 1-7

Claim 1 and claims 2-7, which depend from claim 1, are not anticipated by Pippin because Pippin does not disclose

all of the features of claims 1-7. For example, with respect to claim 1, Pippin does not disclose, at the least, "a plurality of temporary storage compartments" combined with the step of "associating, during a mail sorting process, each one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments with only one delivery point on the mail carrier's route," as is recited in claim 1. Furthermore, Pippin does not disclose a mail sorting method comprising the step of "removing the mail pieces stored in said temporary storage compartment by transferring said mail pieces to the compartment of the transportable container with which said temporary storage compartment is associated," as is also recited in claim 1.

Pippin discloses a mail sorting system and method. More specifically, Pippin discloses manually or automatically sorting mail into individual bags (i.e., compartments) of a multi-bag storage device 30. See col. 5, lines 7-10 ("One implementation of the invention incorporates a multi-bag mail case whereby the carrier cases the mail directly into individual bags that are then delivered to respective postal patrons."). Pippin further discloses that "once sorting to individual bags is completed, the entire device 30 may be disconnected from the case and pulled down as a unit." Col. 6, lines 9-11. Pippin further discloses that the device 30 "can then be stored, for example, in a flats tub or letter tray 50 as shown in FIG. 4 or other container, and for this purpose device 30 preferably has dimensions that permit it to fit closely within existing letter trays 50 used by the USPS." Col. 6, lines 11-14.

In rejecting claim 1 over Pippin, the Examiner has

made an erroneous contention. The Examiner contends that elements 46 disclosed in Pippin are a plurality of temporary storage compartments. This contention is without merit.

Elements 46 are not temporary storage compartments. Rather, elements 46 are merely "marks or graduations 46 [that] may be provided along one of the rails 41 so that visual alignment of each bag mouth 31 with its corresponding is maintained." Col. 5 line 67 to Col. 6, line 2 (emphasis added).

Pippin, as discussed above, discloses a plurality of bags, wherein each bag stores a batch of mail addressed to a particular postal patron. These bags are not "temporary storage compartments" either because these bags are given to the carrier and the carrier gives the bags to the appropriate postal patrons. See col. 5, lines 7-10 ("the carrier cases the mail directly into individual bags that are then delivered to respective postal patrons."). For this reason, in no-way can the bags be considered temporary mail storage compartments. For this reason alone, the rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn.

Second, even if we were to assume for the sake of argument that the bags disclosed in Pippin are "temporary storage compartments," Pippin would still not disclose the invention defined in claim 1. As discussed above, claim 1 requires removing the mail from the temporary storage compartments by transferring the mail to corresponding compartments of a transportable container. In Pippin, the batches of mail that are stored in the bags are not removed from the bags by transferring the batches to a portable container. Rather, Pippin makes clear that the bags are

removed from case 41 and then placed in a tray 50. That is, when the bags are placed in the tray 50, each bag contains a batch of mail. In short, at no time does Pippin disclose removing each batch of mail from each bag by transferring each batch of mail to a corresponding compartment of a transportable container.

Moreover, even if the "space 42" (see FIG. 3) disclosed by Pippin is a temporary storage compartment, Pippin would still not anticipate claim 1 because claim 1 requires "associating, during a mail sorting process, each one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments with only one delivery point on the mail carrier's route." Claim 1 (emphasis added). It is clear from FIG. 3 of Pippin that, during the mail casing (i.e., sorting) process, each space 42 is associated with a plurality of delivery points. Thus, even if space 42 is a temporary storage compartment, Pippin does not anticipate.

In short, Pippin does not disclose all of the features of claim 1. Applicant, therefore, respectfully requests that the rejection of claim 1 be withdrawn.

With respect to claims 2-7, these claims depend from claim 1 and are patentable over Pippin for at least the same reasons given above.

(b) Claims 8-10 and 12-14

The rejection of claims 8-10 and 12-14 are moot as claim 8 has been amended to include the features of claim 11. Accordingly, claims 8-10 and 12-14 are now in condition for allowance.

(c) Claims 15-20

Claim 15 and claims 16-20, which depend from claim 15, are not anticipated by Pippin because Pippin does not disclose all of the features of claims 15-20. For example, with respect to claim 15, Pippin does not disclose, at the least, "a transportable, expandable container ... comprising a plurality of expandable compartments, wherein each said expandable compartment is associated with one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments such that no two of said expandable compartments is associated with the same temporary storage compartment," as is recited in claim 15.

Pippin discloses a transportable tray 50. However, tray 50 does not have a plurality of expandable compartments, let alone a plurality of expandable compartments, wherein each expandable compartment is associated with one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments such that no two of said expandable compartments is associated with the same temporary storage compartment.

Pippin further discloses a transportable multi-bag device 30 having a plurality of expandable compartments (i.e., bags). However, Pippin does not disclose that each expandable compartment (i.e., bag) is associated with one of the temporary storage compartments "such that no two of said expandable compartments is associated with the same temporary storage compartment." Claim 15.

In short, Pippin does not disclose "a transportable, expandable container ... comprising a plurality of expandable compartments, wherein each said expandable compartment is associated with one of the plurality of temporary storage

compartments such that no two of said expandable compartments is associated with the same temporary storage compartment." For this additional reason, the rejection of claim 15 should be withdrawn.

With respect to claims 16-20, these claims depend from claim 15 and are patentable over Pippin for at the least the same reasons given above.

New Claims

New claims 21-27 are added. Claim 21 depends from claim 15 and is allowable for at least the same reasons give above with respect to claim 15. Additionally, claim 21 is patentable over Pippin because Pippin does not disclose "a plurality of temporary storage compartments, wherein, during a mail sorting process, each one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments is associated with only one delivery point on the mail carrier's route," as is recited in claim 21. As discussed above with respect to claim 1, Pippin does not disclose this feature.

Pippin discloses a multi-bag device 30 having plurality of bags and a case 41 having a space 42 for temporarily holding the multi-bag device 30. The case 41 may have "marks or graduations 46." Col. 5, line 67 to Col. 6, line 1. It is self-evident that a "mark or graduation 46" is not a temporary storage container.

Further, the individual bags of the multi-bag device 30, as discussed above with respect to claim 1, are not temporary storage containers because the mail carrier carries the bags with him/her when delivering the mail. Moreover, as discussed above with respect to claim 1, space 42 is associated with multiple delivery points during the

mail casing process. Accordingly, Pippin does not disclose "a plurality of temporary storage compartments, wherein, during a mail sorting process, each one of the plurality of temporary storage compartments is associated with only one delivery point on the mail carrier's route," as is recited in claim 21. Thus, Pippin does not anticipate claim 21.

With respect to independent claims 22 and 24, independent claim 22 includes all of the features of original claims 1 and 6 and independent claim 24 includes all of the features of original claims 15 and 17. Accordingly, independent claims 22 and 24, and the claims that depend therefrom, are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections, and that they be withdrawn.

Applicant believes that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

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If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Respectfully submitted,

By  01/12/2005

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